

**A Cautious Patriotism: the American Churches and the Second World War/Women Against the Good War: Conscientious Objection and Gender on the American Home Front, 1941-1947**

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Still, even if Iowa is ignored and too little is said about the factors ruling out a government-supported industry organization, Breen is to be commended for rescuing the pre-1933 USES from obscurity and making its history a case study of one contested path taken to forge an American substitute for the European administrative state. These are no small accomplishments.

*A Cautious Patriotism: The American Churches and the Second World War*, by Gerald L. Sittser. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997. x, 317 pp. Notes, bibliography, index. \$39.95 cloth.

*Women against the Good War: Conscientious Objection and Gender on the American Home Front, 1941-1947*, by Rachel Waltner Goossen. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997. xiii, 180 pp. Illustrations, tables, notes, bibliography, index. \$39.95 cloth, \$15.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY BILL DOUGLAS, DES MOINES

With very different lenses and filters, Gerald Sittser and Rachel Waltner Goossen have both contributed to our understanding of the war-laden culture of the United States during World War II.

In 1948, Ray Abrams—known for writing *Preachers Present Arms* during the 1930s, a blistering attack on U.S. churches for their unquestioning support for World War I—assessed the position of American churches regarding World War II. His article noted a new degree of caution during the later war. With much more attention to the details and nuances of the religious situations in the United States during the 1940s, Sittser reaches the same conclusion.

Sittser's intellectual—specifically theological—history of institutions focuses on churches' attitudes toward impending conflict and then the fact of war. Carefully sifting through denominational journals and resolutions, he sought and usually found the premises and assumptions that underlay any disagreement. Sittser is at his best when describing, summarizing, and assessing diverse theological positions, giving judicious treatment to Niebuhrain realism and pacifism, to modernism and fundamentalism alike.

Sittser is persuasive in marshaling the evidence to show that patriotism in American churches was cautious, in contrast to World War I; and listing the legacy of World War I and the influence of Reinhold Niebuhr as causes also seems right. But his own work seems overly cautious in drawing conclusions. Several questions remain unanswered. How much influence did this caution exert on the government and on the larger society? How much erosion of religious authority occurred

between the wars? How much of the caution was due to the relative lack of defensiveness among war advocates once the U.S. joined the hostilities, bringing about an overwhelming consensus in favor of the war and the consequent political insignificance of voices in opposition? A brief contrast with Cold War rhetoric might have been helpful, perhaps drawing on Mark Toulouse's study of wartime churchman-turned-Cold Warrior John Foster Dulles. On the other hand, Sittser's discipline in not straying chronologically from his subject is also admirable.

Occasionally, one can fault Sittser's emphases; I counted five references to the tiny, ultra-Calvinist Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Discussion of groups whose pacifist roots seem to have withered between the two world wars, such as the Churches of Christ or the Assemblies of God and other Pentecostal denominations, could have bolstered his thesis. (There is just one reference in passing to Pentecostals.) Using the Detroit riot of 1943 as an indicator of black anger is not very persuasive when whites probably precipitated the riot, and blacks were more victims than perpetrators.

Sittser is scrupulous in his extensive citing of primary materials, but footnoting of secondary works is less complete. In one of his few discussions of a local congregation, he intriguingly evokes the experience of the First Reformed Church in Boyden, Iowa (Sioux County), which sent twenty sons into the military, four of whom were killed. But whether this story is from personal or family experience, primary or secondary research is not clear, as it is not documented in the notes.

It is aggravating that so much of the author's good work is made relatively inaccessible by the inadequacies of the index. (Neither the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Pentecostals, nor Detroit appear in the index.) Even when items do appear, the index often gets them wrong: Methodist bishop Adna Wright Leonard appears in the index without his last name, and readers are given the wrong page for A. Phillip Randolph. Despite all the missing or mangled references, a reader who turns to the book hoping to learn about "western civilization" will find that heading represented in the index.

If in the 1940s war was still very much a man's realm, so was theology. I found only four references in Sittser's book to individual women—three to theologian Georgia Harkness, and one to activist Dorothy Day. Interestingly and perhaps significantly, both of these women were pacifists. So Rachel Goossen's examination of a small group of women who considered themselves conscientious objectors (c.o.'s) either by working for Civilian Public Service (CPS) or by supporting men c.o.'s who were in that pacifist alternative to the military

begins to fill a gap in the expanding literature of World War II pacifism in the United States. Goossen's much less ambitious project nonetheless gives a much more immediate and personal sense of the wartime era for a group of women who were made outsiders in several ways: as religious or political dissidents, as war objectors in a total war, and as c.o. women in a society where even objection to war was significantly circumscribed by gender. Thirty excellent photos help draw the reader into these women's isolated but determined lives.

Goossen does a good job of placing her subjects in both their pacifist and gender contexts; and she successfully communicates her solid grasp of the current issues regarding women's roles during World War II. One minor irritant is the abbreviated nature of the footnotes; a reader wanting complete documentation sometimes must turn to several sections of the bibliography, as the footnotes do not make clear whether the citation is for an article or a dissertation. The narrow lens gives up the possibility of comparative analysis with other groups—for example, what about women whose chief focus was not support for those in CPS but those in prison? Goossen's book is cautious in its own way. I would have liked to have read more about the women c.o.'s reactions to the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and how that changed attitudes toward war. Neither Sittser nor Goossen gets the peculiar nature of Jehovah's Witnesses' resistance to World War II quite right.

References to Iowa are slim but present in each volume: Goossen mentions the largest CPS camp in Iowa, at Denison, several times. She also portrays in a positive light Iowan Sanford Yoder, who used his patriarchal position within the Mennonite church to confer accepted status to the women-dominated Mennonite Nurses Association. But an adequate Iowa account would have to use the newsletter *Iowa Fellowship* as a source and tell the story of author Ruth Suckow's speaking tours to CPS camps. In addition to brief references to Iowa Quaker Clarence Pickett (220) and the University of Dubuque (136), Sittser has several references to Iowa Nobel Prize winner John R. Mott. Mott even makes the index! Despite these cautions, both books are solid contributions—Sittser's as a summary of religious attitudes and Goossen's for connecting pacifist dissent with gender studies.

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